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The split of a working-class city: urban space, immigration and anarchism in inter-war Barcelona, 1914–1936

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ABSTRACT: Barcelona was the capital city of European anarchism during the inter-war years. The aim of this article is to discover the sociological and territorial features of the radicalized CNT (the Confederación Nacional del Trabajo), the anarchist union, which generated the summer 1936 revolution. By looking at the role of urban space as a variable in the collective processes of the working class the article argues that the unskilled recent immigrant worker and the neighbourhoods where this working-class figure was dominant were the key protagonists of revolutionary radicalism.

The aim of this article is to investigate the working-class strata that supported the radical political attitudes of the convulsive Republican years in Barcelona, and especially the attitudes of the anarchist sphere.¹ The aim is to determine the sociological and territorial features of the radicalized CNT (Confederación Nacional del Trabajo or National Confederation of Labour, the anarchist union), which generated the 1936 revolution at the beginning of the Spanish Civil War (1936–39). Many years of research on a key city of twentieth-century working-class revolutions and hundreds of books on the Spanish Civil War have done little to identify the armed workers who took the streets to defeat the fascist coup. It is not known where those workers came from, what their skills were or in what neighbourhoods or under what conditions they lived. What is known is that the revolution which they found unexpectedly in their hands was to a great extent an anarchist enterprise. It has been assumed offhandedly that their everyday settings were in generic ‘working-class neighbourhoods’. In the end, however, urban space has been neglected in the accounts of working-class revolutionary Barcelona. Indeed, most Spanish

¹ This article is a short abstract of a longer study of the working class in inter-war Barcelona. Detailed references of its various aspects are developed extensively in J.L. Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular. Espacio urbano, inmigración y anarquismo en la Barcelona de entreguerras, 1914–1936* (Barcelona, 2008).

working-class historians have also overlooked the role of urban space as a variable in working-class collective processes, something which makes comparisons with other Spanish cities an especially difficult task.²

In recent years a good scholarly literature has appeared on 1930s anarchism in diverse Spanish cities, and especially in Barcelona.³ Nevertheless, the city focus, that is to say, the city location of working-class political and union attitudes, has been absent. Only the work of two British historians, Rider and Ealham, and one recent congress and an atlas have started to make some significant advances on the subject

² There are of course sundry chapters on the space and everyday life of the popular classes in diverse published works. For the big cities in the period 1900–36 I would mention: J. Alvarez Junco, *El emperador del Paralelo. Lerroux y la demagogia populista* (Madrid, 1990); S. Juliá, *Madrid, 1931–1934. De la fiesta popular a la lucha de clases* (Madrid, 1984); R. Reig, *Blasquistas y clericales. La lucha por la ciudad en la Valencia de 1900* (Valencia, 1986); M. González Portilla (ed.), *Los orígenes de una metrópoli industrial: la ría de Bilbao* (Bilbao, 2001); J.L. García Delgado (ed.), *Las ciudades en la modernización de España. Los decenios interseculares* (Madrid, 1992); C. Arenas, *La Sevilla inerme* (Ecija, 1992); *Sevilla y el Estado (1892–1923)* (Seville, 1995); L. Castells (ed.), *El rumor de lo cotidiano, Estudios sobre el País Vasco Contemporáneo* (Bilbao, 1999). For a general overview of Spanish working-class history see A. Barrio Alonso, 'Historia obrera en los noventa: tradición y modernidad', *Historia Social*, 37 (2000), 143–60. On the relations between urban and working-class history, see J.L. Oyón, 'Historia urbana e historia obrera: reflexiones sobre la vida obrera y su inscripción en el espacio urbano, 1900–1950', *Historia Contemporánea*, 24, 1 (2002), 11–58. On the progressive opening of traditional working-class history to urban history and spatial issues, see: I. Katznelson, *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States* (New York, 1981); I. Katznelson, *Marxism and the City* (Oxford, 1992); I. Katznelson and A.R. Zolberg (eds.), *Working-Class Formation: Nineteenth-Century Patterns in Western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, 1986). See also J.E. Cronin, 'Labor insurgency and class formation: comparative perspectives on the crisis of 1917–1920 in Europe', in J.E. Cronin and C. Siriani (eds.), *Work, Community and Power. The Experience of Labor in Europe and America, 1900–1925* (Philadelphia, 1983); Y. Lequin (ed.), 'Ouvriers dans la ville', *Le Mouvement Social*, Special Issue 118 (1982); S. Magri and C.H. Topalov (eds.), *Villes ouvrières, 1900–1950* (Paris, 1989); M. Savage, 'Urban history and social class: two paradigms', *Urban History*, 20 (1993), 61–77; M. Savage and A. Miles, *The Remaking of the English Working Class 1840–1940* (London, 1994); E. Faue (ed.), 'The working classes and urban public space', Special Issue, *Social Science History*, 24 (2000); 'Working-class suburbanization', Special Issue, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 64 (2003). Urban history literature focusing more or less specifically on space and the working class is extensive. I would mention especially: O. Zunz, *The Changing Face of Inequality: Urbanization, Industrial Development and Immigrants in Detroit, 1880–1920* (Chicago, 1982); R. Dennis, *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography* (Cambridge, 1984); M. Gribaudi, *Mondo operaio e mito operaio. Spazi e percorsi sociali a Torino nel primo Novecento* (Turin, 1987); J.-L. Pinol, *Les mobilités de la grande ville, Lyon (fin XIXe – début XXe siècle)* (Paris, 1991); A. Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900–1939* (Buckingham, 1992); R. Harris, *Unplanned Suburbs. Toronto's American Tragedy, 1900–1950* (Baltimore, 1996); R. Lewis, *Manufacturing Montreal: The Making of an Industrial Landscape* (Baltimore, 2000).

³ A. Barrio Alonso, *Anarquismo y anarcosindicalismo en Asturias, 1890–1936* (Madrid, 1988); J.M. Macarro, *Sevilla la roja* (Brenes, 1989); Juliá, *Madrid, 1931–1934*; E. Montañés, *Anarcosindicalismo y cambio político. Zaragoza, 1930–1936* (Zaragoza, 1989); J.I. Bueno, *Zaragoza, 1917–1936: de la movilización popular y obrera a la reacción conservadora* (Zaragoza, 2000); F.J. Navarro, *Ateneos y grupos ácratas. Vida y actividad cultural de las asociaciones anarquistas valencianas durante la Segunda República* (Valencia, 2002). For Barcelona, see: C. Boix and M. Vilanova, 'La participación electoral en Barcelona entre 1934 y 1936', *Historia y Fuente Oral*, 7 (1992), 47–84; M. Vilanova, *Les majories invisibles* (Barcelona, 1995); A. Monjo, *Militants. Participació i democràcia a la CNT als anys trenta* (Barcelona, 2003); E. Vega, *Entre revolució i reforma. La CNT a Catalunya (1930–1936)* (Lleida, 2004).

of Barcelona.⁴ One crucial aspect involves immigration. The figure of the radical non-Catalan anarchist immigrant was a racist representation spread by part of the Catalanist press in the 1930s. The historian Vicens Vives, the father of modern Catalan historiography, referred to the figure of the anarchist immigrant as the 'foreign, socially irresponsible element' who stoked the fire in working-class Barcelona of the end of the nineteenth century. Historians of recent decades have moved away from these views of immigrant workers and looked at the militants of the CNT in a more balanced way. Anarchist workers were Catalans and non-Catalans and it is difficult to establish any immigration factor in the radical CNT of the 1930s. Nevertheless, up to now this view has not been based on an in-depth demographic study of union membership and militancy,⁵ and this article also seeks to shed further light on this matter.

The inter-war urban explosion

In order to contextualize the working-class revolutionary Barcelona, the first thing to be said is that the city of the 1930s was really very different from that of the beginning of the century. Barcelona, which was a big city before World War I, became a veritable metropolis by 1930. During the inter-war years the city acquired a real industrial structure, orienting itself towards a greater industrial diversification. The weight of the consumer goods industries, which had been dominant in the city in 1900, decreased in relation to the capital-goods and other intermediate industries by 1930. In 1900, textile manufacturing formed the strongest industrial sector in the city's employment structure. As a whole, textiles, leather, paper, graphic arts and alimentary industries quadrupled the employment in the metalwork, chemical, building and timber industries. In 1930, however, the quotient between these two groups of industries was completely balanced.⁶ Barcelona had become consolidated as an industrial

⁴ N. Rider, 'Anarchism, urbanization, and social conflict in Barcelona, 1900–1932', Lancaster University Ph.D. thesis, 1987; C. Ealham, *Class, Culture and Conflict in Barcelona, 1898–1937* (London and New York, 2005); see also A. Smith (ed.), *Red Barcelona, Social Protest and Labour Mobilization in the Twentieth Century* (London and New York, 2002); J.L. Oyón and J.J. Gallardo (eds.), *El cinturón rojinegro. Radicalismo cenetista y obrerismo en la periferia de Barcelona, 1918–1936* (Barcelona, 2004); M. Vilanova and R. Grau, *Atlas electoral de la Segona República a Catalunya*, vol. II: *Barcelona ciutat* (Barcelona, 2006).

⁵ J. Vicens Vives, *Industrials i polítics* (Barcelona, 1958), 163–6, 165; critical comments by A. García Balaña, 'Sobre la "constitució del proletariat" a la Catalunya cotonera. Una crònica de la formació dels llenguatges de classe a peu de fàbrica (1840–1890)', in J.M. Fradera and E. Ucelay-Da Cal, *Notícia nova de Catalunya* (Barcelona, 2005), 97–119, especially 97–102. On this discussion, see A. Balcells (ed.), *El arraigo del anarquismo en Cataluña (Textos de 1926–1932)* (Barcelona, 1973); J. Sabater, *Anarquisme i catalanisme: la CNT i el fet nacional català durant la Guerra Civil* (Barcelona, 1986). As an example of the modern balanced view see E. Vega, 'Radicals i moderats a Barcelona i el seu entorn: una reflexió sobre les seves causes', in Oyón and Gallardo (eds.), *El cinturón rojinegro*.

⁶ C. Massana, *Indústria, ciutat i propietat. Política econòmica i propietat urbana a l'àrea de Barcelona (1901–1939)* (Barcelona, 1985), ch. 2, 64–5; J. Nadal and X. Tafunell, *Sant Martí*

working-class city. The working-class population probably doubled between 1905 and 1930. According to Pere Gabriel, the years of expansion in World War I were the principal period of upsurge. In 1930, two out of three households in the census were formed by manual workers. The diversification of the working-class population was another undeniable change. In 1930, 32.3 per cent of the overall working population was employed in metal crafts and building, surpassing for the first time the population labouring in the textile and garment industries, which totalled 30 per cent.⁷

The urban inter-war growth was truly explosive. Barcelona, with 600,000 inhabitants at the beginning of World War I, reached the figure of 1 million inhabitants in 1930 and 1,062,157 at the beginning of the Civil War (1936). Consequently, the urban population almost doubled in that short period. The population of greater Barcelona rose from 30 per cent of the Catalan population in 1910 to 40 per cent in 1936. The annual growth rate of the population in the 1920s was in fact the highest since the middle of the nineteenth century, and that of the suburban municipalities was even greater. The immigration waves in the 1910s and 1920s were almost the sole cause of the demographic increase because of the weakness of Barcelona's natural growth.⁸ After the massive immigrant arrivals in the years of World War I, there was another even more massive wave in the twenties, composed not only of Catalan, Valencian and Aragonese people but also people from Murcia and Andalusia. The bulk of Catalan economic growth came from the rising demand for housing and services of this new population of Barcelona. The increased purchasing capacity of the working-class population, most of which lived in urban areas, also had a multiplying effect.⁹

For its part, the urban landscape likewise changed substantially. House building reached previously unknown levels, which were higher than those of industrial growth. The extraordinary activity of this manpower-intensive sector had far-reaching effects on a whole series of other sub-sectors, such as concrete and metalworks, which were typical of the diversification process in those years. The growth of the demand

de Provençals: pulmó industrial de Barcelona, 1847–1992 (Barcelona, 1992), 139–207, 273–4, 282–9; C. Sudrià, '1914–1936. L'economia catalana en els anys d'entreguerres: consolidació industrial i diversificació productiva', in *Història econòmica de la Catalunya contemporània*, vol. IV: *Una societat plenament industrial* (Barcelona, 1988), 25–97, 85.

⁷ P. Gabriel, 'La població obrera catalana. Una població industrial', *Estudios de Historia Social*, 32–3 (1985), 191–260, 234. See also 'Censo obrero de 1905', *Anuario Estadístico de la Ciudad de Barcelona*, 1905; percentage of working families in the city: J.L. Oyón, J. Maldonado and E. Grifol, *Barcelona, 1930: un atlas social* (Barcelona, 2001), ch. 1; this study and the rest of the references to 1930 are based on a 5% sample of the 1930 census (*padrón*), Archivo Administrativo Ayuntamiento de Barcelona (AAAB).

⁸ Ayuntamiento de Barcelona, 'L'obra constructiva de l'Ajuntament. Memòria relativa a la formació del Padró d'habitants del terme municipal de Barcelona amb referència al 31 de desembre de 1930', *Gasetta Municipal de Barcelona* (1930); M. Tatjer, 'Evolució demogràfica', in *Història de Barcelona*, vol. VII: *El segle XX* (Barcelona, 1995).

⁹ Sudrià, '1914–1936. L'economia catalana', 43–5; J. Maluquer de Motes, 'Precios, salarios y beneficios. La distribución funcional de la renta', in A. Carreras (ed.), *Estadísticas históricas de España, siglos XIX–XX* (Madrid, 1989), 495–532; P. Gabriel, 'Sous i cost de la vida a Catalunya a l'entorn dels anys de la Primera Guerra Mundial', *Recerques*, 20 (1988), 61–91.

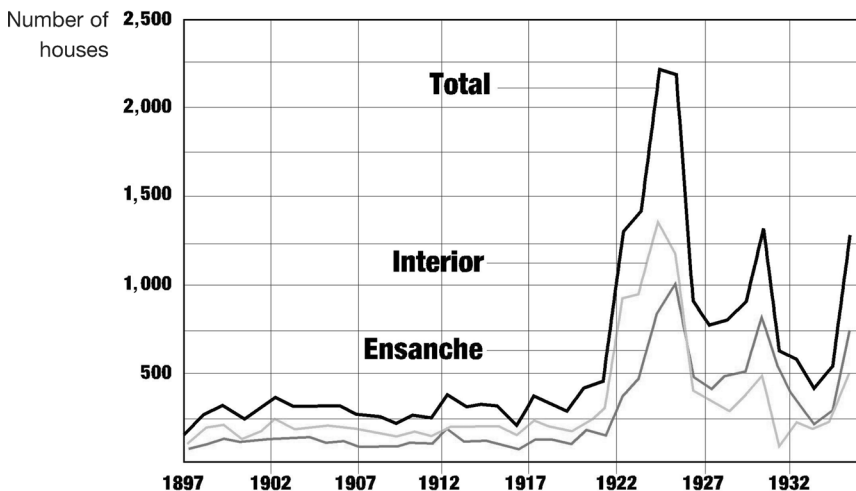


Figure 1: House building in Barcelona, 1897–1935

Source: AAAB, building permits.

generated by the urban explosion also affected public works. The city council was the main party responsible for the rise in public expenditure in Catalonia in the inter-war years.¹⁰ New public works reorganized the internal urban space with a view to adapting the city to the new expansive cycle. Transformations connected with the 1929 International Exhibition were unquestionably the primary cause of the investment increase. Private investment in urban infrastructure also made a qualitative leap in the inter-war years. The real change in house building in Barcelona occurred at the end of World War I, and from that time urban growth became explosive.¹¹ The leap in house building in Barcelona at the end of the war is a striking illustration of the impressive change in urban growth, as may be seen in Figure 1. Whereas the number of buildings rose only 7 per cent between 1910 and 1920, the increase in the next decade reached 32 per cent.¹² The average number of building permits in the period 1917–36 was four times that of the period 1897–1916. The main impetus

¹⁰ Public expenditure in Barcelona went from 78.5 million pesetas in 1914 to more than 135 million in 1932; X. Tafunell, 'La construcció: una gran indústria i un gran negoci', in *Història econòmica de Catalunya, s.XX, Segle XX*, vol. VI: *Indústria, finances i turisme* (Barcelona, 1989), 211–24.

¹¹ A. Cordiviola, C. García, F.J. Monclús and J.L. Oyón, 'La formación de Nou Barris. Dinámica y explosión de la construcción residencial en la periferia barcelonesa, 1897–1935', in *III Congrés d'Història de Barcelona*, vol. II (Barcelona, 1993), 559–72; J.L. Oyón and C. García, 'Las segundas periferias, 1918–1936: una geografía preliminar', in J.L. Oyón (ed.), *Vida obrera en la Barcelona de entreguerras* (Barcelona, 1998), 47–83, 74; see also: Massana, *Indústria, ciutat i propietat*; Tafunell, 'La construcció'; X. Tafunell, 'La construcción en Barcelona, 1860–1935: continuidad y cambio', in García Delgado (ed.), *Las ciudades en la modernización de España*, 3–20.

¹² Between 1910 and 1915 the number of buildings grew a scant 1.5%; see: 'L'obra constructiva de l'Ajuntament'.

was imparted in an intense short cycle in the early twenties. The housing boom was in perfect correspondence with the inter-war housing cycle of many other Spanish and European cities. The difference was that the inter-war building cycle was of greater significance in Barcelona as a result of the standstill which had come about there in the opening decades of the century. Driven by the immigration boom and the public works policy, the extraordinary development of the building sector also stimulated other industrial sub-sectors, such as concrete production, building materials, metal constructions, timber and lumber.

Urban growth was not spatially homogeneous. The old historical city raised its densities to previously unknown overcrowding levels. Neighbourhoods such as La Barceloneta, Santa Mònica, Raval Central and Sant Pere-Santa Caterina reached densities of over 1,000 inhabitants per hectare. The Eixample (the middle-class areas beside the city centre) and the suburban ring, however, were the districts most affected by the building boom. These were the formative years of what I have called the 'second suburbs' (*segundas periferias*) and of an intense growth of the old suburbs in El Llano (the ring of industrial villages aggregated to the city in 1897). Until that time, urban growth had occurred mainly by extension of the existing street plan. From then on, however, it was more discontinuous and fragmented. The 1920s were decisive from both quantitative and qualitative standpoints. The bulk of the new working-class subdivisions colonizing the outskirts of the city in more and more peripheral sites were established in those years. All these new suburbs, which were precariously urbanized and usually formed by tiny one-family houses and small alleys, made up the new living spaces of the working people; consequently, the new ecological niche of the working-class which emerged in this way added itself to the old suburban industrial villages and the dense Old City neighbourhoods.¹³

An internally differentiated world: working-class figures

Barcelona's working class was a very consistent group from the sociological standpoint. Socially immobile, only one out of ten blue-collar sons was able to move upwards to non-manual positions in the inter-war years. Indeed, crossing the border into white-collar status meant the adoption of lifestyles – involving cultural, familial and housing aspects – which were closer to those of the middle classes than to those of the manual workers.¹⁴

Inside the blue-collar world, however, lifestyles were highly segmented by skill and immigration, so Barcelona's working class was differentiated

¹³ Oyón and García, 'Las segundas periferias'.

¹⁴ Social mobility data are based on a sample of marriage registers in 1920 and 1934–35 taken at Archivo del Registro Civil de Barcelona (ARCB). On the socio-cultural features of Barcelona's social classes, see Oyón, Maldonado and Griful, *Barcelona, 1930*, ch. 1: this study and the rest of the references to 1930 are based on a 5% sample of the 1930 census (*padrón*).

internally. Indeed, distinction by skill was very clear. The wage gap between skilled workers (one in five urban workers in the 1930 census) and unskilled workers did not change between 1914 and 1930 (wages were between one third and one half higher for skilled workers). The rise in wages was especially notable from the end of World War I and during the early twenties, and once again – although to a lesser extent – in the Republican period (1931–36). This involved an unquestionable rise in real wages, totalling about 40 per cent on the average. While in 1914 only the skilled workers' wages in a few industrial sectors could cover the family expenses, by 1936 this was the rule for the whole skilled workforce. However, for many unskilled workers it was still difficult to make both ends meet.¹⁵ Moreover, unemployment in the 1930s, which affected especially the building sector with its large number of unskilled workers (who were the worst-paid workers and the last-comers to the labour market), made it impossible for the real wages of many unskilled workers (day-labourers or *jornaleros*) to approach those of the skilled workers. The rate of unskilled illiterate workers more than doubled that of skilled workers. This obstructed the unskilled workers' way to higher wages and blocked their upward mobility, which was further impeded because their nuptiality was much more endogamic than that of the skilled workers. The analysis of marriage records shows that only one out of five unskilled workers' sons could pass the craft boundary in the inter-war years. Non-family cohabitation rates, that is to say, the co-residence of families not tied by kin (subletting), were also 40 per cent higher in the *jornalero* households. Rates of *jornalero* households in shanty towns and other forms of very cheap housing were 58 per cent higher.¹⁶

Barcelona's working class was marked by immigration: the head of three out of four working-class households had been born outside the city. The more recently the immigrants had reached the city, the more proletarian they were. Indeed, income, skills and immigration were tightly interwoven in the city's social hierarchy. Catalans commonly held the best-paid jobs and occupations. Moreover, they formed the social elites and all the non-manual classes were predominantly Catalan. To be sure, there were also workers among the Catalans, but although they totalled 60 per cent of the artisans and skilled workers, they formed a slight minority among the unskilled workers. The opposite was the case among the population born outside Catalonia. There was a low proportion of non-Catalans in the

¹⁵ As opposed to the approaching-wages process postulated by Carles Enrech for the period 1880–1914 in *Indústria i ofici. Conflicte social i jerarquies obreres en la Catalunya tèxtil (1881–1923)* (Bellaterra, 2005), the figures of the Ministerio de Trabajo or Ministry of Labour, *Estadística de salarios y jornadas de trabajo referida al período 1914–1930* (Madrid, 1931), show a complete stabilization of the distance between the wages of skilled and unskilled workers from 1914 to 1930. Sundry information on some wage rises in the thirties can be seen in the personal workers' cards of the factories studied in my work and also in Vega, *Entre revolució i reforma*.

¹⁶ ARCB: marriage record samples 1920, 1934–35; Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular*, ch. 4.

sphere of the non-manual classes. Non-Catalans were more commonly employed in skilled manual labour and, as mentioned, they already outnumbered the Catalans in the unskilled labour sphere. The immigrants came from the regions of Valencia and Aragon, and after 1910 also from Murcia and Almeria (these people were called generically *murcianos*, or Murcians), and indeed they showed a much more clearly working-class composition. The Valencian and Aragonese immigrants formed 28 per cent of the unskilled working class, while the Murcians and Almerians formed 16 per cent. Three out of four Murcian or Almerian household heads living in the city were unskilled workers. Overall, one out of three unskilled households in 1930 were formed by non-Catalans who had reached the city after 1910.¹⁷

The predominance of Catalans in skilled labour also becomes evident on studying non-census sources. Two out of three skilled workers who married in the city in 1934–35 were born in Catalonia. Nevertheless, in a sample of metalworkers affiliated to the CNT and to the UGT (the socialist Unión General de Trabajadores or General Union of Workers) just before the Civil War, Catalan workers represented 70 per cent of all skilled workers. An analysis of the workforce of Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima (the biggest metalworks company in Barcelona) shows that immigrant origin, skills and wages were closely linked, forming a type of labour structure which may also be observed in other industrial sectors. Whereas the Catalan worker, literate, more skilled and with better support networks in the city, tended to occupy the highest tiers of the wage pyramid, non-Catalan unskilled workers, and especially the late-comers to the city, occupied the lowest and most unstable tiers.¹⁸ The building sector shows the same picture. If we study union data either by company or by district branches, two out of three masons were Catalan. On the other hand, Catalans formed a minority in the sphere of building labourers, in which the overwhelming majority were immigrants. An important sector in which the skilled-worker ratio was very high and literacy almost complete was the graphic crafts. Of the skilled workers in this sector (typographers, typesetters, printers, plate-press operators, lithographers, linotype operators and photo-engravers), 76 per cent were born in Catalonia. In the artisanal crafts connected with small business, the Catalan worker rates reached 80 per cent, with an absolute literacy level. The only exception was in the textile industries. Here, according to the *padrón*, 71 per cent of the occupations connected with textile manufacturing (foremen and stewards, dyers and dressers, weavers, warpers, spinners) were working people born in Catalonia. A more complete estimate using CNT and UGT membership data from the middle of 1936 with respect to the *ram de l'aigua* or 'water sector' (that is to say, dyers, dressers and other

¹⁷ (AAAB), *padrón de habitantes*, 1930. For a systematic study of immigration at 1930 *padrón* see Oyón, Maldonado and Griful, *Barcelona*, 1930, ch. 2.

¹⁸ La Maquinista Terrestre y Marítima, *Fichas de personal* (workers' register cards).

textile crafts using water) leads to the same conclusion: the study of these affiliated workers at the *padrón*, shows that 77 per cent were Catalan.¹⁹

There was also an immigration divide among unskilled workers. Indeed, the distinction by fortune, social mobility and lifestyle between the immigrant *jornaleros*, and especially immigrants from the south-eastern Spain, and the Catalan *jornaleros* was very apparent. The data from the *padrón* of 1930 show clear distances between the unskilled Murcian or Almerian workers who had reached the city from 1910 and the unskilled Catalan workers. Illiteracy rates were 70 per cent higher for the former than the latter. Household size and number of children were also 37 per cent and 71 per cent higher, respectively. Likewise, the living standards of unskilled immigrants from Murcia and Almería were especially low in other respects, such as poverty, health and mortality.²⁰ Upward mobility for the most recent wave of immigrant workers was more blocked than for Catalans. The study of marriage records from 1934–35 shows that four out of ten Catalan unskilled workers' sons succeeded in crossing the skill divide in the course of one generation. An additional group of 10 per cent was even able to emerge from the manual work sphere. Improvement expectations were not the same for the recently immigrated day-labourers' sons: only one out of six could get a better-paid skilled job in the course of one generation, which is equivalent to just half the expectation of the Catalan day-labourers' sons.²¹

In short, it was not only more common to find Catalans in the best-paid jobs and skilled occupations: the distinction with respect to non-Catalan immigrants as a sociological group was also notable. Given all this evidence, I have considered three different *figures* of Barcelona's male working-class world with specific socio-cultural features: the artisan and skilled worker, the Catalan unskilled worker and the recently arrived non-Catalan immigrant worker. Female workers are difficult to study because census sources provide information on their jobs only occasionally.

¹⁹ Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular*, ch. 2.

²⁰ The impact of poverty was especially significant. During the 1920s, the number of poor families from Murcia and Andalusia registered at the Instituto Municipal de Demografía surpassed at some moments that of the five-times bigger group of native families. The group of Valencian-Aragonese immigrant poor families was similar. Mortality rates were higher in the blue-collar classes and especially high among the most recently arrived working-class immigrants: the mortality rates among Almerian *jornaleros* doubled those of the non-manual classes. Disease impact was also higher. The figures for contagious diseases treated at Hospital Municipal de Infecciosos show that in 1931 more than 27% of the hospitalized patients came from Murcia and Almería provinces. The Catalan provinces, with a population which was seven times higher, registered only 30% more sick people. See Oyón, Maldonado and Grifol, *Barcelona, 1930*, ch. 4; 'Classificació de malalts assistits durant 1931', *Gaceta Municipal*, 1932. *Estadística*, Suplemento de la *Gaceta Municipal* (1927), 238, 440. See also Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular*, ch. 2.

²¹ ARCB, marriage records, 1934–35. Similar conclusions may be drawn from an analysis of the 1930 census. In a sample study of census tracts, we have found that boys and girls of unskilled workers left school at an early age to devote themselves to manual labour.

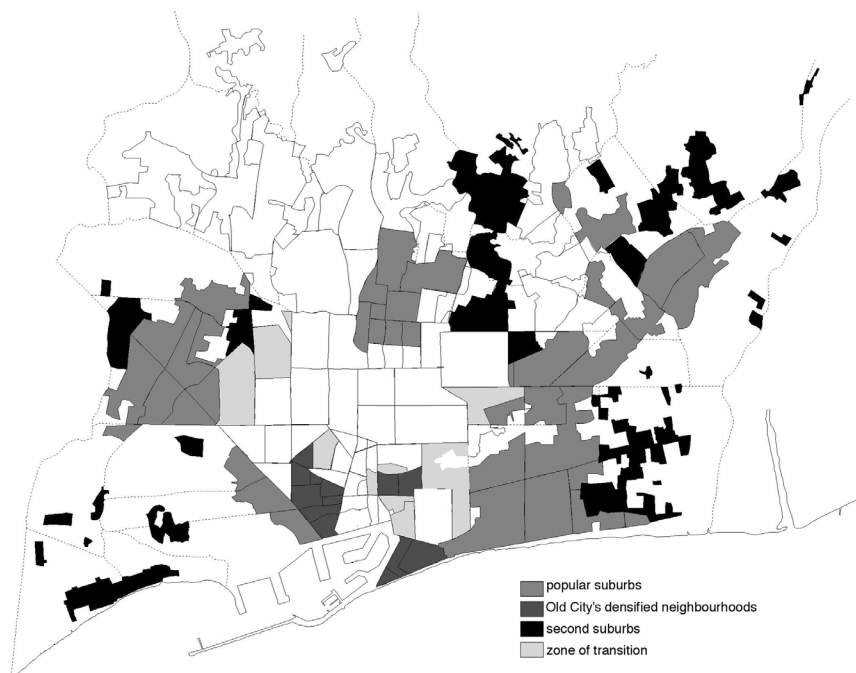


Figure 2: The three working-class stages

The everyday city

A geographical study of the 1930 *padrón* shows that there were three main spatial settings in which these working-class figures came to unfold their everyday life (see Figure 2). These three settings encompassed 80 per cent of all the working-class families. The first and most important setting, encompassing 250,000 workers, was that of the old popular outlying working-class districts of El Llano de Barcelona (*suburbios populares*). Unskilled workers were in the majority here, many of them being old residents in the city, but skilled workers also formed an important social component. Even office workers and small shopkeepers were not uncommon. In fact, popular suburbs were actually 'small cities', forming a blend of popular social strata, factory and workshop activities and shopping premises, which was very typical of many popular quarters in the nineteenth century. The second setting was that of the densified neighbourhoods of the Old City centre. In many ways they shared the same features of a 'popular mix', but the existence of poor housing conditions, recent immigration, households with women as the primary breadwinners and ancient shops and artisans' workshops entailed a more complex structure. The second suburbs (*segundas periferias*) were the third

spatial setting. These were brand new spaces at the city outskirts. Recently arrived immigrant unskilled workers and precarious housing conditions set the keynote. The traditional popular mix of the other two settings was substituted by a much clearer working-class homogeneity. The latter two settings, which showed similar population figures, added up to the same working-class population as the popular suburbs setting.

Working-class figures and working-class settings have been studied in four main fields of everyday life: residential segregation, housing, mobility and sociability. Residential segregation between rich and poor was quite pronounced. It had been rising between 1900 and 1930. There was a big spatial opposition between the social extremes, that is, the 20 per cent formed by the middle and upper classes and the 50 per cent formed by unskilled workers (dissimilarity indexes $I_d = 59, 40$).²² In contrast to unskilled workers, skilled workers – forming 11 per cent of the census population – were much more mixed ($I_d = 18, 33$, segregation index $I_s = 13$). Skilled workers were very apparent, for instance, in the central districts of the rich Eixample area. Spatial segregation was particularly evident in the immigrant enclaves. If the well-to-do distanced themselves from the unskilled workers, within the working-class world there was a crucial segregation, that is to say, a much clearer separation of some of the unskilled workers and especially of those who had most recently immigrated, in the proletarian ghettos. The most outstanding segregation and concentration indexes were in fact those of the Murcian ($I_s = 33$, location quotient = 3.3; 3.9) and Andalusian immigrants. The spatial distance between these two groups and the Catalans was quite clear ($I_d = 37, 32$). In no other place was the isolation of the neighbourhood so clear as in the second suburbs.

The three different tiers of the working-class letting market coincided exactly with the three different working-class settings which I have previously defined (see Figure 3). Almost all the *barrios* or neighbourhoods of the lower rents, under the line of 45 *pesetas*, were included in the bottom tier of the second suburbs. The middle tier, between 45 and the 55.2 *pesetas* of the city-wide working-class letting average, delimited precisely the working-class densified *barrios* of the Old City. The upper tier, above the 55.2 *pesetas* line, was concentrated mainly in the popular suburbs, where housing conditions were more varied and apartments generally bigger, with higher rents and comparatively better-furnished houses. In the tiny Old City subdivided flats and in the second suburbs' small one-family houses, the presence of immigrant workers was also dominant.

²² Census tracts of the 1930 *padrón* (around 11,000 inhabitants) are six times larger than the English nineteenth-century census tracts and five times larger than the American ones used in urban historical geography studies. That is why segregation indexes of 30–40 in Barcelona may be considered relatively high. The segregation index of unskilled workers in Barcelona, for instance, which was around 30 for a population representing 50% of the total population, may be considered quite substantial (*padrón* districts could have been disaggregated if the size of the sample (5%) were larger).

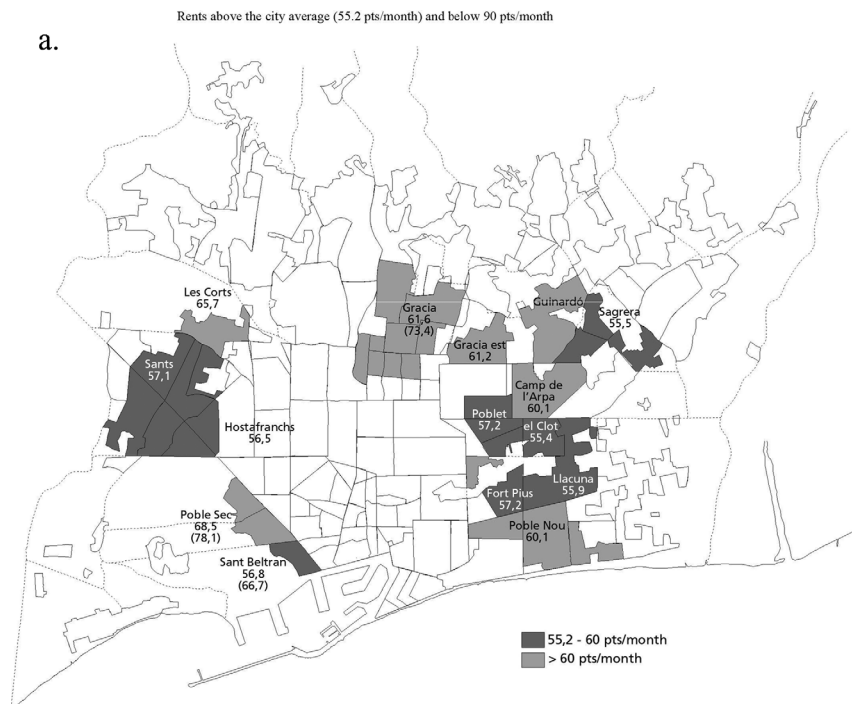


Figure 3: For caption see next page.

This was also common in the decisive subletting market. The differences between the Catalan day-labourers' and the south-eastern Spanish day-labourers' households stood out. Co-habitation, which affected one out of three Catalan *jornalero* households, was the rule for seven out of ten Murcian or Almerian *jornalero* households. Of the former, 14 per cent, and of the latter, 40 per cent shared dwellings between two or more non-kindred families. By the same token, a Murcian or Almerian day-labourer's household was twice as likely to live in infra-housing than a similar Valencian or Aragonese household, and four times more likely than a Catalan one. My own estimates from eviction proceedings also set the various popular figures on clearly differentiated levels: 52 *pesetas* per month was the average rent of a recently immigrated unskilled worker; rising to 64 *pesetas* for a Catalan unskilled worker, 71 *pesetas* for a skilled worker and 85 *pesetas* for a white-collar worker.²³

The journey to work was also related to income and skill: the higher the wage the longer the journey to work. Skilled workers were the most tramway-dependent. In comparative terms they were living the

²³ Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular*, ch. 4. The basic source has been eviction proceedings from 1931 to 1936, Archivo Judicial de Barcelona.

b.

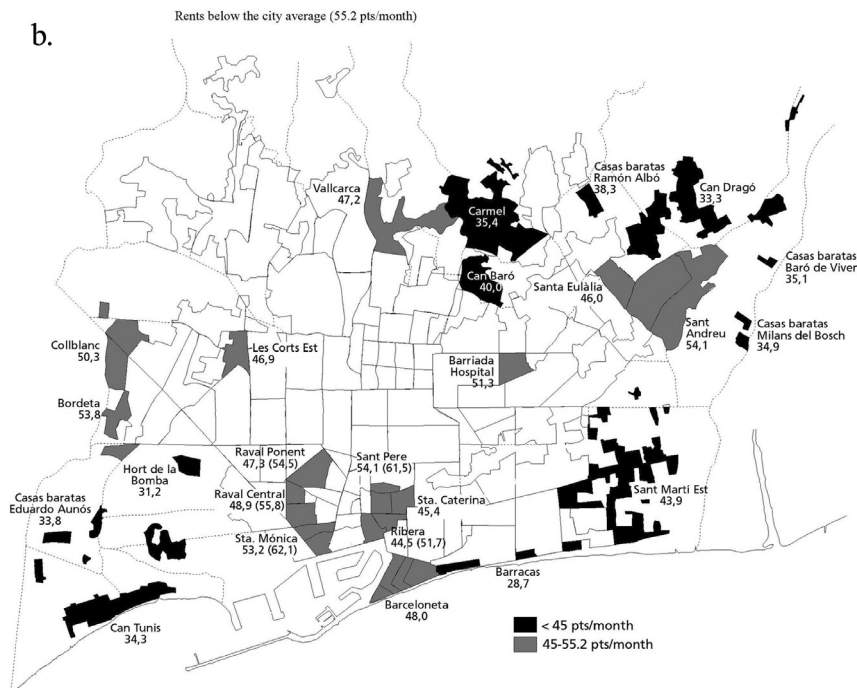


Figure 3: a. The high step of working-class housing rents, 1931–36

b. The low step of working-class housing rents, 1931–36

Source: Archivo Judicial de Barcelona, Libro registro de expendientes de desahucio.

farthest away from their jobs: more than half lived over 2 kilometres from their work (the average journey was 3 km for the nine factories of the study). Walking to work and occasional tramway use, on the other hand, was the everyday experience of most day-labourers (2 km), women and apprentices (less than 1 km). Given the lack of industries there, walking was the common experience in the second dormitory suburbs, as the analysis of journeys to work shows in the case of La Torrassa.²⁴

The analysis of residential mobility, friendship and kin relations, courtship space and neighbourhood use of public space, shows the survival of a world of proximity.²⁵ Nevertheless, once again we find

²⁴ C. Miralles and J.L. Oyón, 'De casa a la fábrica. Movilidad obrera y transporte en la Barcelona de entreguerras, 1914–1939', in Oyón (ed.), *Vida obrera*; J.L. Oyón and C. Enrech, 'Las diferentes movilidades de un municipio suburbano. Hospitalet y el censo obrero de 1923', in Oyón and Gallardo (eds.), *El cinturón rojinegro*. Cross-comparisons with other European cities in Oyón, 'Historia urbana e historia obrera'. See also Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular*, ch. 5.

²⁵ Residential mobility has been studied in workers' register lists of various industrial firms, in a sample of ten census tracts of the 1930 *padrón*, in the poll lists of 1932, in the 1940

striking internal differences between working-class figures and working-class settings. Skilled workers were clearly less residentially mobile. Long distances were involved when they moved, and they left their original neighbourhood. But in the new neighbourhood they could re-create new communitarian friendship networks. There they found brides and experienced the *barrio* community in many ways. In comparative terms, skilled workers were the most communitarian and 'neighbourly', showing more residential persistence in the neighbourhood, and their kin, courtship and friendship relations were at least as tight and close as those of the unskilled workers who were most closely attached to their *barrio*. Not much more residentially mobile (but with very short-distance moves), the Catalan unskilled workers showed a communitarian behaviour which could hardly be distinguished from the skilled-worker pattern. The biggest behavioural gaps in neighbourhood community relations were those of non-Catalan unskilled workers. Although their friendship and courtship patterns do not appear to be very different from those of the other two working-class figures, they were much more residentially mobile (with rates of over 20 per cent yearly) and, with the exception of those living in the second suburbs, they were less supported by kin networks. On the eve of the Civil War, they had fewer opportunities to take root firmly in the neighbourhood space. Popular suburbs were the more stable working-class setting from the community standpoint. With kin and friendship support rates similar to those of the Old City quarters, popular suburbs also had the highest marriage endogamy. These were likewise the spaces that offered the best prospects of residential longevity. At the other end, second suburbs were by contrast the most unstable working-class neighbourhoods and those with the lowest endogamy rates. In compensation, all the primary sociability issues to which I have referred – kin, friendship, neighbours – were channelled through an intense street life. The street became the necessary extension of the house, a genuine melting pot of urban practices.

Many data underline the specificity of the particular everyday lifestyles of the various working-class setting and figures studied. I found this division to be decisive. The recent immigrant workers were the worst accommodated among the three worker figures, the most residentially unstable in the same neighbourhood, the least supported by kin networks, the most compelled to intensive and non-normative use of public space and the least related to the local sociability facilities. If we except the support of kin networks (even stronger than in popular suburbs), these are the same features we find in the second suburbs. In no other place was the impression of physical isolation and the segregation of 'communities

padrón and in 200 life histories. The study of courtship space has been made for 1920 and 1934–35 through marriage record analysis; that of kinship through family reconstitution on the 1930 *padrón* and 1932 poll lists in seven working-class sample census tracts. For more details on these sources, see Oyón, *La quiebra de la ciudad popular*, ch. 6.

of equals' clearer. Cheap housing rents and the worst urban conditions (lack of piped water, sewerage, street pavement) were also concentrated there.

Figures and spaces of the revolution

After the Dictadura (dictatorship) interval (1923–30), the anarchist union (CNT) once again became the hegemonic force, representing more than two-thirds of the city's working population.²⁶ In the 1930s, the leadership of the revolutionary *faísta* faction (the FAI or Iberian Anarchist Federation vanguard which was to channel the revolution) fostered a CNT attitude of open insurrectionary opposition to the new Republican order. Membership dropped by 50 per cent during the Republican years (1931–36). In the new CNT of the eve of 1936, which was at once smaller and more revolutionary, the second suburbs showed the higher affiliation rates. Actually, if we consider affiliation in the three main sectors of manual work in Barcelona – textiles, metalworks and building, representing 52 per cent of the membership – we see the full CNT predominance in the second suburbs: for each UGT (the more moderate socialist union) worker there were six workers of the three big anarchist unions. In the popular suburbs, however, the position of *cenetistas* or adherents of the CNT was quite different: for each worker affiliated to the UGT there were just two workers affiliated to the CNT. By June 1936, the UGT started to compete with the CNT in this traditional working-class setting.²⁷ This latent rivalry was to become much more overt during the Civil War, when the wave of new membership produced by the decree of compulsory union affiliation increased the number of *ugetistas* (UGT adherents) to almost the same figures as those of the *cenetistas*. If one considers militancy instead of membership, the image is also quite clear. The second suburbs were the comparatively denser residential setting of CNT militancy, almost quadrupling the relative weight of the UGT in this setting. The Old City quarters and the popular suburbs presented, however, a much more balanced situation. The picture becomes even clearer if we include significant militants in the surrounding municipalities, where the bulk of the CNT militants lived in the new neighbourhoods created in the inter-war years.²⁸

²⁶ Vega, *Entre revolució i reforma*, 139–40.

²⁷ Data on the various sections of the CNT *Sindicato Único de la Construcción* (Sole Building Union) and on the same branch of the UGT have been taken from Archivo de la Guerra Civil de Salamanca (AGCS), Político-Social (PS) Barcelona, Carp. 1321, 1322, 1431, 1434, 1454, 371, 1515; in the metal sector: *ibid.*, Carp. 1372, 1186; in textiles, mainly in the *Ram del l'Aigua*, *ibid.*, Carp. 526, 857, 895, 902.

²⁸ Taking 100 as the mean of the city, the rate of *cenetistas* versus *ugetistas* in the second suburbs was 133 versus 36, 128 versus 101 in the densified neighbourhoods of the Old City and 93 versus 94 in the popular suburbs. The figures refer to hundreds of well-known militants (militants of *comités de relación*, craft sections or quarter (*barriada*) sections – generally involving CNT), re-worked from AGCS, PS Barcelona and M. Íñiguez, *Esbozo*

The second suburbs, therefore, were not only the urban spaces of higher CNT membership but also those of the most active CNT militancy. Examples of these *cenetista* strongholds were numerous, from La Torrassa, La Colònia Castells or La Trinitat, to the four Casas Baratas groups. However *cenetistas* and *ugetistas* shared extensive areas of the city, either in the Old City or in the popular suburbs. Although the CNT was strong in the most proletarianized neighbourhoods of the Old City, such as the Barrio Chino or La Barceloneta, this strength tended to decrease in the northern areas of El Raval. The *cenetistas* also dominated extensive spaces in the most working-class popular suburbs such as El Clot and El Poble Nou, but they were much more closely rivalled by the *ugetistas* in the more socially mixed suburbs such as Poble Sec or Gràcia. In 1936 the role of the popular suburbs as exclusive fortresses of the CNT (the numerically most important setting of the Barcelona working class) was diminishing because of the increasing competition of other more moderate union and political tendencies.

Higher rates of unskilled and recent immigrant workers among the CNT membership explain why the principal CNT strongholds were the immigrant-proletarian ghettos. This is the main conclusion which may be drawn when the union affiliates of a significant number of industrial sectors are studied, name by name, in the 1930 *padrón*. The *cenetistas* were unskilled workers in a higher proportion than the *ugetistas* in sectors such as metalworks, construction, paper, graphic arts and possibly transport. Excepting textiles, their origins lay outside Catalonia in more than two out of three members studied, who usually belonged to families which had reached the city in the previous 20 years (the same conclusion may be drawn from studying the surrounding municipalities of Santa Coloma, Sant Adrià and El Prat). Co-habitation and illiteracy rates doubled those of the UGT membership. An analysis of union leaders and militants shows the same trend, a contrast which becomes especially significant on comparing radical *cenetistas* and *treintistas* (the group of more moderate

de una *Enciclopedia Histórica del anarquismo español* (Madrid, 2001); and M T. Fernández de Sas and P. Pagés (co-ord.), *Diccionari biogràfic del moviment obrer als Països Catalans* (Barcelona, 2000). On the hegemony of the CNT in the surrounding municipalities see: D. Marín, 'Anarquistas y sindicalistas en L'Hospitalet. La creación de un proyecto de autodidactismo obrero', in Oyón and Gallardo (eds.), *El cinturón rojinegro*; D. Marín, 'De la llibertat per conèixer al coneixement de la llibertat', Universidad de Barcelona Ph.D. thesis, 1995; D. Marín, *Clandestinos. El Maquis contra el franquismo, 1934-1975* (Barcelona, 2002); J.J. Gallardo, *Revolució i Guerra en Gramenet del Besòs (1936-1939)* (Santa Coloma de Gramenet, 1997); J.J. Gallardo, 'La acción libertaria en el origen de una ciudad dormitorio', in Oyón and Gallardo (eds.), *El cinturón rojinegro*; J. Andreassi, *Libertad también se escribe con minúscula. Anarcosindicalismo en Sant Adrià (1926-1939)* (Barcelona, 1996); D. Ballester, 'La bipolarització sindical durant la guerra civil. El cas de Santa Coloma de Gramenet', *Àgora*, 8 (2003), 165-76. On the scant significance of the UGT in El Prat de Llobregat, see S. Bengoechea and M. Renom, 'Vells i nous espais de pràctiques sindicals i polítiques al Prat del Llobregat, 1917-1939', in Oyón and Gallardo (eds.), *El cinturón rojinegro*, 303-32, 314-17; S. Bengoechea and M. Renom, *Memòria i compromís. Classes treballadores i política al Prat de Llobregat (1917-1979)* (Barcelona, 1999), 68-74.

cenetistas which split away from the CNT at the beginning of the Republic) (see Table 1). The CNT militants were predominantly male, three out of four working as unskilled *jornaleros*.²⁹ Non-Catalan immigrants were over-represented among this militancy: almost two-thirds of the militants were born outside Catalonia. On the other hand, the UGT and *treintista* militants (members of the SS.OO. or Sindicatos de Oposición (Opposition Unions) to the CNT) were more likely to be skilled workers than the *cenetistas*, showing a notable proportion of white-collar workers, and they were born generally in Catalonia. These differences were also reflected in their lifestyles: illiteracy, co-habitation and overcrowding were more evident among the CNT militants than among the UGT and SS.OO., and while the CNT used the second suburbs and, to a lesser extent, some neighbourhoods of the densified Old City as their principal residential settings, the latter used the Eixample and the popular suburbs as their main living settings.³⁰

The significance of an environment that made the new *barrios* at the city outskirts the real anarchist hotbeds and turned the immigrant workers into the main core of the revolutionary CNT is even more striking on studying the geographical spread of the more political and radical anarchists, that is to say, of the militancy in the FAI and the *Juventudes Libertarias* (JJ.LL. or Libertarian Youth, the young *faístas*). The second suburbs were in fact the foremost strongholds of revolutionary radicalism. Affiliation to FAI *grupos de afinidad* (affinity groups) was 2.4 times higher in these second suburbs than would be expected on the basis of the working-class resident population.³¹ The Old City membership was in line with the overall city average whereas the membership in the popular suburbs was 22 per cent lower than could be expected (see Figure 4). Eight out of ten *faístas* found in the 1930 *padrón* were unskilled workers and lived in households or were household heads of non-Catalan origin (over two out of three of the militants were born outside Catalonia). Of the militants, 80 per cent had come to Barcelona after 1911 and their average time of residence in the city was about 13 years. The young *faístas* of the JJ.LL. had a territorial distribution in which the outlying *barrios* also stood out.³² At the beginning of 1937, the only working-class setting in which the presence of Libertarian

²⁹ I have studied some 400 militants who held positions in the various union branches or were significant figures by virtue of their militant activity. Most of them were CNT militants but some 90 *ugetistas* and 35 *treintistas* are also included, which is why these data must be considered with caution.

³⁰ Poll behaviour in the various Republican elections shows a specific conduct of the second suburbs, which were more abstentionist than the other two working-class settings and showed greater support for political parties such as *Extrema Izquierda Federal*, a political organization which sought to be the upholder of many *cenetista* slogans.

³¹ AGCS, PS Barcelona, *Actas de la Federación Local de Grupos Anarquistas de Barcelona*, 1937 and 1938, Carp. 1307, contains sundry information on some 150 *grupos* and more than 700 militants. There were more than 1,000 *faísta* militants at the end of 1936.

³² Data worked out from the representatives at the JJ.LL. plenary assemblies of March and May 1937: AGCS, PS Barcelona, Carp. 120. About 7,000 Libertarian youths of the Barcelona area were represented at the June 1937 Regional Congress; see also Carp. 1348.

Table 1: *Leaders and militants of CNT, UGT and SS.OO. 1930–36 (%)*

	Average age (years)	Skilled workers	White collars	Catalan	No Catalan	Nuclear families	Cohabitation	Household size	Illiteracy rate
CNT	30.3	19.2	7.0	35.1	64.9	48.3	44.4	6.0	20.2
UGT	33.7	23.1	25.6	58.6	41.2	49.4	27.8	5.3	3.9
SS.OO.	34.7	32.4	14.3	64.7	35.3	67.8	21.9	4.5	0.0

Source: Fernandez de Sas and Pagès (coord.), *Diccionari biogràfic*; Íñiguez, *Enciclopedia histórica*; AGCS: the UGT and SS.OO. militants' names come from lists kindly provided by Eulàlia Vega and David Ballester.

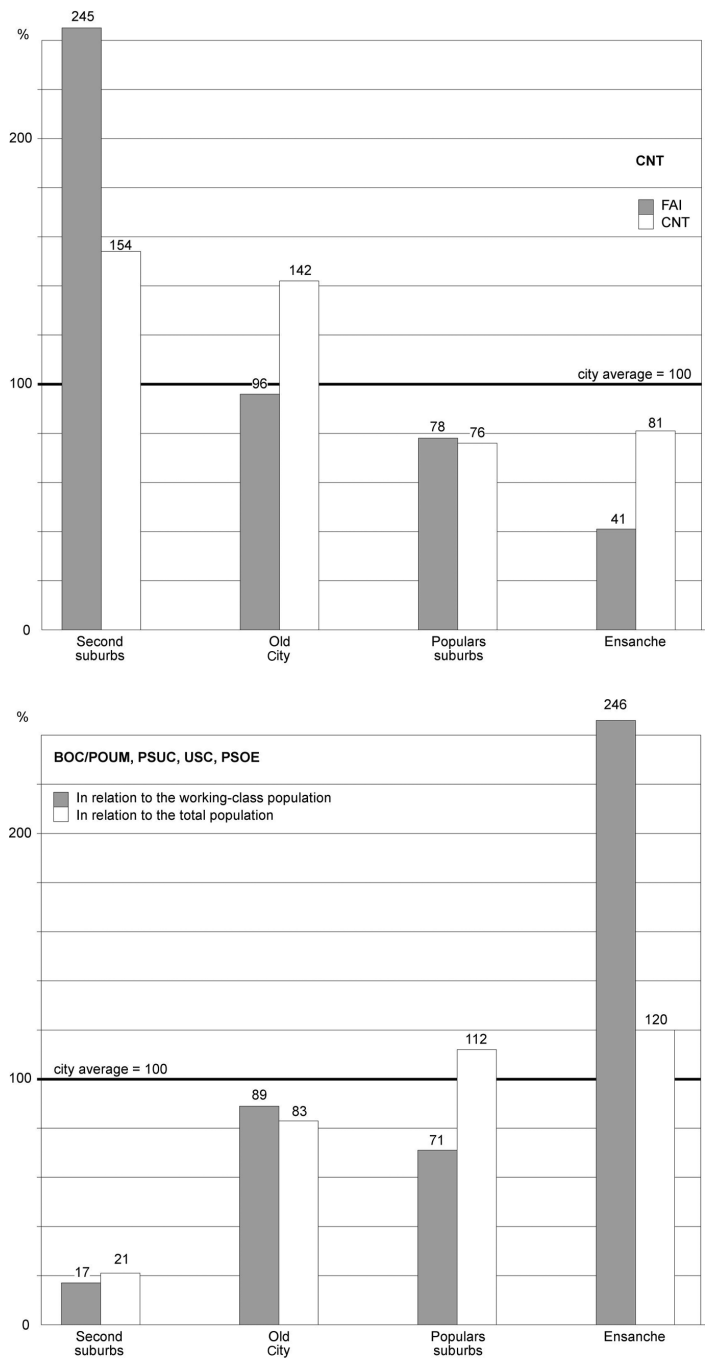


Figure 4: Residential location of outstanding anarchists, socialist and communist militants in the different urban stages, 1930–36

Table 2: *Anarchist, socialist and communist leaders and militants: social and immigrant profile and housing, 1930–36 (%)*

	Average age	Skilled workers	White collars and non-manual	Catalan	No Catalan	Nuclear families	Cohabitation	Household size	Illiteracy rate
CNT	30.3	19.2	7.0	35.1	64.9	48.3	44.4	6.0	20.0
FAI	29.0	12.6	6.3	32.6	67.4	48.0	50.0	5.9	21.4
BOC-POUM	25.3	28.9	51.1	80.0	20.0	58.3	19.4	5.6	0
PSUC	28.1	28.6	47.1	78.8	22.2	60.1	23.4	5.1	0
USC	31.9	23.0	88.2	92.5	7.5	50.0	32.3	5.8	0
PSOE	42.6	25.8	57.5	63.1	36.9	65.8	19.5	3.6	0

Source: Fernandez de Sas and Pagès (coord.), *Diccionari biogràfic*; Íñiguez, *Enciclopedia històrica*; and AGCS, PS Barcelona.

youth was clearly higher than the city average was the second suburbs, which doubled the Barcelona average. Of all the Libertarian youth, 40 per cent were militants at the JJ.LL. centres in the outlying *barrios*. The same thing may be observed in the case of the political-cultural facilities promoted by these anarchist groups, the *ateneos libertarios* (Libertarian athenaeums). The *ateneos* list of 1936 shows that one third of the 50 centres were located on the map in the same constellation of peripheral neighbourhoods.³³

On the other hand, the socio-spatial outline of prominent militants of the working-class non-anarchist political parties was at the diametrically opposite extreme. Barcelona's map, drawn with the addresses of militants of the philo-Trotskyist BOC (Bloc Obrer i Camperol) and POUM (Partit Obrer d'Unificació Marxista), the socialist-nationalist USC (Unió Socialista de Catalunya), the communist PSUC (Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya), the socialist PSOE (Partido Socialista Obrero Español) and the nationalist Partit Català Proletari, shows its residential epicentre in the bourgeois Eixample, while the popular suburbs alone were of any importance. The second suburbs, on the other hand, formed a completely marginal militant setting (see Figure 4).³⁴ Indeed, on comparing spatially the anarchist militants and other working-class militancy, we discover two different Barcelonas, one 'populist'³⁵ and the other 'radical-anarchist', of completely opposite character. These were two Barcelonas, however, with some common spaces of confluence in the overcrowded neighbourhoods of the Old City and especially in the popular suburbs, which were the real disputed working-class setting. Similar opposition may be observed in an analysis of the sociological features of the militancy. When the militants of these political parties were manual workers, which was rather uncommon, they were predominantly skilled workers and born chiefly in Catalonia. With the exception of the PSOE, non-Catalan immigrants were a minority. Likewise, their socio-cultural patterns and their everyday lifestyles reflected features which were more oppositional than confluent. There was no illiteracy and neither was household cohabitation or overcrowding as pronounced as in the case of the CNT-FAI militants (see Table 2). Spoken and written language, as evidenced in the

³³ On the *ateneos* founded in these years in the Barcelona area, see Navarro, *Ateneos y grupos ácratas*; P. Solà, 'La base societaria de la cultura y de la acción libertaria en la Cataluña de los años treinta', in B. Hofmann, P. Joan and M. Tietz (eds.), *El anarquismo español y sus tradiciones culturales* (Madrid and Frankfurt, 1995), 361–75 and Appendix; P. Solà, 'Educació popular i comunisme llibertari al medi urbà: una mostra d'ateneus de l'àrea barcelonina', in *IX Jornades d'Història de l'Educació als països Catalans, 1918–1936* (Barcelona, 1987), 405–21; P. Solà, 'L'ateneisme àcrata durant la segona república', *L'Avenç*, 11 (1977), 69–73; P. Solà, *Els ateneus obrers i la cultura popular a Catalunya (1900–1939): l'Ateneu Enciclopèdic Popular* (Barcelona, 1978), App. II; my list of *ateneos* also includes *ateneos* taken from other sources such as AGCS, PS Barcelona, Carp. 1307 and 921; AGCS, Recuperación, documento 3, and Libro de Detenciones, Caja 46.

³⁴ The main source has been Fernández de Sas and Pagès (co-ord.), *Diccionari biogràfic*.

³⁵ On the concept of Catalanist populism see E. Ucelay-Da Cal, *La Catalunya populista* (Barcelona, 1982).

press, meetings and proceedings, was the final distinguishing element (the Spanish language in the case of CNT and FAI, and the Catalan language in most of the cases of UGT, socialist or communist political parties and leftist Catalanist parties).

Given the significant radicalism in the proletarian outskirts, their participation in the foremost collective actions of the 1930s is not surprising. The first action was the rent strike of the summer of 1931.³⁶ It achieved an intense following in these *barrios* (the eviction requests multiplied in all the working-class areas in the summer months but the rate of unpaid rents was 75 per cent higher in the second suburbs than in the popular suburbs and the Old City neighbourhoods). The four Casas Baratas housing estates, which started the rent strike spontaneously, actually kept it going until 1939. The strike was also important in some of the more overcrowded immigrant neighbourhoods of the Old City, such as La Barceloneta. From the end of 1933 to the beginning of 1935, the second suburbs were the protagonists of the first urban transport movements.³⁷ The picture is equally clear on considering the specifically political struggles. The peripheral suburbs played a leading role in the insurrectional cycle of the beginning of the 1930s, especially in the December 1933 uprising. The epicentre of the uprising in the Barcelona area was the Collblanc-La Torrasa peripheral suburb. Libertarian communism was declared and for four days the anarchist groups seized and held the surrounding city of L'Hospitalet.³⁸ It was the prelude to the events of July 1936. This radicalization of the peripheral spaces of Barcelona's anarchism is not surprising and it should be seen in relation to that of the Madrid second suburbs in the 1930s. Indeed, the comparative political behaviour of these spaces in the inter-war years could be considered. If, in inter-war Paris, home ownership and more socially varied working-class peripheral spaces made a *banlieue rouge* where Marxist politics and populist front parties had a huge impact, the Barcelona *jornalero* outskirts created a black-and-red belt.³⁹

³⁶ See N. Rider, 'Anarquisme i lluita popular: la vaga de lloguers de 1931', *L'Avenç*, 89 (1986), 6–17; N. Rider, 'Anarchism, urbanization, and social conflict in Barcelona, 1900–1932', Lancaster University Ph.D. thesis, 1987, vol. I, 483–97, vol. II, 699–732, 815–38, 873–85, 932–46, 967–74, 988–1007; and N. Rider, 'The practice of direct action: the Barcelona rent strike of 1931', in D. Goodway (ed.), *For Anarchism* (London, 1989), 79–109.

³⁷ Archivo Transportes de Barcelona, Caja 5557, *Recortes de prensa sobre la concesión Torner*, 1933–34; *Las Noticias*, 9 Nov. 1934; *El Noticiero*, 28 Apr. 1934, *El Diluvio*, 17, 20 and 29 Oct. 1933.

³⁸ J. Peirats, *La CNT en la revolución española*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1971), vol. I, 78; memories consulted, kindly given to the author by Dolors Marín from the personal papers of José Peirats, 38–9; J. Camós, *L'Hospitalet, l'història de tots nosaltres, 1931–1936* (Barcelona, 1986), 76–8; Marín, *Clandestinos*, 195–201.

³⁹ Julià, *Madrid, 1931–1934*, chs. 2 and 6. There are numerous studies on the Paris *banlieue rouge*: J.-P. Brunet, *Saint Denis, la ville rouge* (Paris, 1980); A. Fourcaut, *Bobigny, banlieue rouge* (Paris, 1986); T. Stovall, *The Rise of the Paris Red Belt* (Berkeley, 1990); A. Fourcaut (sous la direction de), *Banlieue rouge 1920–1960* (Paris, 1992); J. Giralut (dir.), *Ouvriers en banlieue, XIXe–XXe siècles* (Paris, 1998); A. Fourcaut, *La banlieue en morceaux* (Paris, 2000);

The radical character of the immigrant outskirts was plainly expressed in the months of the revolution. From 19 July the active presence of very dynamic neighbourhood committees (*Comités Revolucionarios de Barriada*) controlled many aspects of everyday life, from food distribution to voluntary enlistment of militiamen (*milicianos*) to defend the revolution on the Aragon front. More than 60 per cent of the young Barcelona *milicianos* of the CNT-FAI at the battle front came from the immigrant quarters of the city, in either the Old City's overcrowded neighbourhoods or, mainly, the second suburbs.⁴⁰ In relative terms, the second suburbs doubled the Barcelona average of anarchist *milicianos*. While the overcrowded old neighbourhoods recruited 40 per cent more anarchist *milicianos* than the Barcelona average, the popular suburbs recruited a good deal less than the mean. The map of the *milicianos* with respect to the rest of the workers and the popular political organizations was again clearly different from that of the *cenetistas*.⁴¹ The hegemony of the young anarchist militiamen in the second suburbs was indisputable: of every four *milicianos* resident in the city outskirts, three were anarchists and only one came from non-anarchist political organizations. On the other hand, balance was the rule in the two other working-class settings. The main feature of the *milicianos* was their unskilled immigrant profile: two-thirds of the Barcelona anarchist militiaman households were headed by non-Catalan men who had reached Barcelona after 1910, which doubled the expected rate. Overcrowding and co-habitation were clearly higher among these households than was usual in Barcelona's working-class districts. The most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, where there were greater urban shortages on all levels, were those which supplied the greatest numbers to the various anarchist columns. The inter-war outskirts, the strongholds of radical anarchism, would also suffer the greatest repression after the so-called May Days of 1937, when the revolutionary attainments of the 'short summer of anarchy'⁴² were finally suspended, and they were the areas which would consequently fill Barcelona's prisons with Republican government prisoners until almost the end of the Civil War. Indeed, the residents of the second suburbs more than doubled the expected relative rate and their social and labour profile fitted the features of the radical

For a possible comparative view of Anglo-saxon cities, see R. Harris and P. Larkham, *Changing Suburbs: Foundation, Form and Function* (London, 1999); R. Harris and R. Lewis, 'The geography of North American cities and suburbs, 1900–1950. A new synthesis', *Journal of Urban History*, 27 (2001), 262–93; B. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven. Life and Politics in Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920–1965* (Chicago, 2002); R. Harris, 'The suburban worker in the history of labor', *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 64 (2003), 8–24.

⁴⁰ C. Calvo and J.L. Oyón, 'Milicianos anarquistas de Barcelona: inserción geográfica y perfil social', in Oyón and Galardo (eds.), *El cinturón rojinegro*.

⁴¹ ANC (Arxiu Nacional de Catalunya), Fondo Generalitat, Defensa-Guerra Civil: payment certificates of the *Comité Central de Milicias Antifascistas*, rolls 223–69.

⁴² H.M. Enzensberger, *El corto verano de la anarquía* (Barcelona, 1977).

world to which I am referring.⁴³ The final act of the tragedy, when the fascist troops entered Barcelona in January 1939, would be the elimination of every form of resistance. Of the *cenetistas* executed at the *Camp de la Bota* at the end of the war, 71 per cent were non-Catalan immigrant workers, born almost exclusively, like the anarchist *milicianos*, of non-Catalan families.⁴⁴

Epilogue

In conclusion, the unskilled recent immigrant worker and the neighbourhoods where this working-class figure was predominant, the second suburbs and, secondarily, some overcrowded quarters of the Old City, were the key protagonists of the revolutionary radicalism (and after the May Days the real losers). The figure of the radical anarchist immigrant has been ignored by the populist front historiography of recent decades. Most of the *cenetista* immigrants reached the city in the last immigrant wave which had been set into motion by World War I. However, it must be said that the average anarchist immigrant of the inter-war years seldom had political ideas of his own on arriving in Barcelona. If it is true that the CNT-affiliated immigrants who I have studied in the 1930 *padrón* and the militants, the CNT and FAI leaders and the young Libertarian *milicianos*, belonged in most cases to the most recent immigrant wave, they had nevertheless been living in the city for an average of 10 to 15 years. As they were all relatively young in the period 1930–36, it is obvious that most of them had arrived as children or teenagers and, therefore, that they heard about the CNT at an early age and possibly joined the anarchist union when they were just starting to work in Barcelona (as is confirmed by many biographies). With the exception of some older workers who had joined the union in the golden years of the CNT at the end of World War I, most of the workers must have become affiliated from 1930, when they had already acquired some experience in the city's labour world. Unlike the Catalan workers who were skilled and decided to join other working-class unions or political parties in higher rates, non-Catalan unskilled immigrant workers found the radicalized CNT of the 1930s, the FAI and the JJ.LL. more attractive. As Juan Suriano has pointed out with respect to turn-of-century Buenos Aires, radical anarchism provided the political language of misery and dissatisfaction to immigrant workers who were frustrated in their desire for upward mobility. The real wage rise (and repression) brought about the anarchist decline in inter-war Buenos Aires. The real wage rise at the end of World War I and during the Republican years turned away from the radical anarchism of the 1930s a far from negligible

⁴³ AGCS, PS Barcelona, Carp. 11, 365. A total of 250 prisoners are recorded in two long prisoner lists (September 1937 and Spring 1938) in the 1930 *padrón*.

⁴⁴ I have found in part in the 1930 *padrón* the family data of a list of 55 *cenetistas* given by J.M. Solé and J. Villarroya, *La repressió franquista a Catalunya, 1938–1952* (Barcelona, 1988), 152–4, 244–5, 262–5, 352–82.

number of Barcelona's skilled workers (although certainly less than in the case of Argentina since the increase was not so substantial). These Barcelona workers saw in other working-class options, in Catalanism or in a more passive behaviour, positions which were closer in harmony with what they perceived as an improved standard of living.⁴⁵

The determination of the social subject and the urban spaces of anarchist radicalism in Barcelona are a useful tool for re-examining the conventional views of the revolution of 1936. As opposed to a 'populist' inter-class sociological vision of the inter-war working-class world and contrary to an analysis denying the existence of a revolution in the city (an analysis which considers solely the collaboration of the popular forces in the Republican anti-fascist Frente Popular), a socio-spatial analysis explains the diversity of urban experiences within the urban world, its fragmentation in diverse strata with different everyday lifestyles, political perceptions and collective action patterns, and the key revolutionary role of the immigrant unskilled workers. Leaving aside the real depth of the Barcelona revolution, the 'Short Summer of Anarchy' of 1936 was above all a 'revolution of the poor', a poor who represented a substantial part but not the total mass of the city's working class. After living in the city for an average of about ten years or a bit longer, these immigrant workers and their families remained unskilled *jornaleros* and still lived under tough conditions. Simply put, these immigrants and these revolutionary outskirts with blocked expectations of upward mobility had less to lose. In many respects, their city stood at the opposite side of town from the populist city. Indeed, what is found on comparing the radical anarchist Barcelona with the city of the rest of the working-class unions and political parties is not a town forming a common front against fascism but a *divided city*, from either the spatial or the sociological standpoint. Actually, there was a real *split* in the working-class city. It was not only a geographical split segregating the second suburbs from the other working-class settings but also an internal split in Barcelona's working-class world between the skilled and unskilled workers, between the immigrant and the native workers. The May Days were the final expression of these three deep ruptures produced in the inter-war years.

As opposed to a 'communitarianist' (or a firmly partisan) vision of Barcelona's revolutionary course as a simple divorce between the anarchist leaders and a betrayed grassroots militancy, as a split between the committees and 'the working-class neighbourhoods' (as idealized anarchist neighbourhoods full of dense communitarian sociability networks), a socio-spatial analysis shows that not all the working-class neighbourhoods formed such communities. During the 1930s a differentiated working-class composition, a distinct everyday lifestyle and a divergent political behaviour divided the political action patterns of

⁴⁵ J. Suriano, *Anarquistas. Cultura y política libertaria en Buenos Aires, 1890–1910* (Buenos Aires, 2001); J. Suriano, *Auge y caída del anarquismo. Argentina, 1880–1930* (Buenos Aires, 2005).

many of the traditional working-class neighbourhoods (which moved away progressively from the radical *cenetismo* and became more and more open to other political and union options) from the proletarian immigrant outskirts, which were ready to fight for social change.⁴⁶ Indeed, the areas with more firmly rooted radical anarchism – the second suburbs – were in the strict sense the least ‘neighbourly’ of the city: these were the areas of higher residential mobility, with less dense courtship networks, with greater distances to the workplaces and the least equipped with sociability centres which would strengthen the community. The revolution was not a reality which was evenly felt in *all* the working-class neighbourhoods. It was not a project of *all* the Barcelona workers but primarily of a radical segment of the working-class world, a very important segment, of course, but not the only one. This was probably something that should have been considered internally by the supposedly traitorous CNT leaders and many members and militants who opted for collaboration, for calls of anti-fascist unity and for progressive integration in the Republican order from the opening months of the revolution (obviously, there were more decisive external reasons for setting aside the revolution, for example the difficulties of carrying it out under conditions of war in a city that would become isolated from the rest of the country, and the unlikely prospect of receiving support from the rest of the democratic European countries).

The attitude of increasing collaboration shown by the CNT during the revolution and the war period was a sign that many leaders of the top committees, the more or less ‘passive’ or ‘moderate’ members (many of whom, being card-holding members, voted for Esquerra Republicana and the Frente Popular alliance), the re-affiliated *treintistas*, and many of the former radicals converted to realism by the Civil War, also had their own everyday life spaces and their own sociological features. The outskirts of the revolution materialized not only the split in the working-class and the popular city, the separation between popular frontism, a large and socially mixed working-class world, and the radical behaviour of the

⁴⁶ In particular I would like to point out Chris Ealham’s book *Class, Culture and Conflict* as a thorough documentary account of Barcelona’s *cenetista* radicalism in the 1930s and especially of the connections of this radicalism with the cultural world of the unemployed. This is an extremely valuable book which, as opposed to the populist front historiography which most often ignores or condemns radical *cenetismo* without further analysis, presents it in scholarly terms. However, Ealham’s book also contains some of the kind of communitarianist views to which I have referred. In my opinion (and this is merely a remark which in no way detracts from this book’s enormous value), the working-class neighbourhood, which plays a fundamental role in Ealham’s account, is treated as the main material support of the *cenetista* political behaviour without making a specific study of its internal mechanisms (the communitarian sociability networks which were supposedly the fundamental support of *cenetismo*) and without specifying the differences between neighbourhoods. Despite his explicit intention of attributing to the urban space a key role, Ealham’s study is limited to an imprecise geography of the city. Actually, many of Ealham’s references to radicalism and collective actions against the Republican order relate to the second suburbs and the Old City immigrant neighbourhoods. A good book presenting the historiographical version of the betrayal of the revolution is M. Amorós, *La revolución traicionada* (Barcelona, 2003).

unskilled immigrants of the proletarian ghettos. They also expressed the internal split of Barcelona's working-class world into two worlds which the urban explosion made explicit within the anarchist union itself. This article does not deal with this more silent *cenetista* world but many militants matched this profile in numerous union branches, committees, factories and neighbourhoods. They were, in a sense, the followers of the golden CNT years in Barcelona, a city broken by immigration and inter-war urban explosion, both socially and spatially.